

DRINK AND THE RECRUITING SYSTEM.

[THE following leading articles from the *Alliance News* of Saturday, March 16th, and Saturday, April 13th, have such an important bearing upon questions now under the consideration of Parliament vitally affecting both our national morality and our national safety, that it has been considered advisable to republish them for more extensive circulation in this form.]

First Article.—March 16th, 1867.

Considering that drunkenness is the prevailing vice of the army, and the cause of most of the crimes committed in the army, it is a painful and remarkable fact that our recruiting system should be so arranged as to encourage this habit in our soldiers from the first moment of their enlistment. The decisive proof of the corrupting influence of the system is that even steady non-commissioned officers are demoralised by it, and that commanding officers refrain from spoiling their best men by sending them on recruiting parties. How great, then, must be its power over raw recruits at that impressible period of life when young men enter on their first employment, ready to be moulded by the example of new and more experienced associates! It is a strange phenomenon that, while we spare neither pains nor expense to reclaim, in reformatories and penitentiaries, persons picked out of the streets, for whom we are not specially responsible, we deprave, by tempting them on their weakest point, our own young soldiers, the most helpless and dependent of the servants of the State.

The key to this problem is to be found in the following questions addressed by the Earl of Dalhousie, the chairman of the last Recruiting Commission, to the Duke of Cambridge, and in His Royal Highness's answers:—

1407. Your Royal Highness must be aware that the mode of recruiting for the army at present is not the most creditable which might be observed in inducing young men to enter the service?—No.

1408. Could your Royal Highness suggest any mode of improving that system?—I think that it would be impossible. With the volunteer system you must get the men where you can find them. Of course if you can get a better class of men so much the better, but our experience has not proved that we can do so; therefore my fear is that, do what you will, you must take what you can find, whether it is exactly what you wish or not.

1402. And even though you wish it, you cannot be very particular as to the place in which you recruit?—No; I do not think that you can help that.

As the army-purchase system, and the absence of any proper regulation of the army administrative departments, precludes us from appealing to the higher motives and better feelings, by the usual professional inducements, we are obliged to seek our recruits in low public-houses and other haunts of vice, and to keep them in a half-intoxicated state until they can be brought under the articles of war. Of course it is extremely difficult to keep together an army so composed. In 1858 twenty-nine per cent. of the army at home had their names inserted in the *Hue and Cry* as deserters, or 20,360 men out of 70,000! To prevent the army from disbanding, provision was made in the Mutiny Act of 1859 for punishing desertion by flogging, and for marking deserters on the breast with the letter D, “such letter not to be less than an inch long, and to be marked upon the skin with some ink or gunpowder or other preparation, so as to be visible and conspicuous, and not to be liable to be obliterated.” Every trained soldier who deserts costs the country at least £100, and the expense of recovering and punishing deserters amounts to a large annual sum besides; but the pecuniary loss is hardly deserving of mention compared with the sanction given by this evil official system to what foreigners justly regard as our national vice.

The utterly immoral character of the system will be apparent to anybody who will take the trouble to read the evidence published with the reports of the Royal Commissions of 1860 and 1866 on the recruiting of the army, or even to cast his eye over the index; but some idea of it may be obtained from the following statement abstracted from that evidence.

The recruiting of the army is conducted entirely in public-houses, to which the recruits are inveigled by a class of persons called “bringers,” who are crimps of the very worst character, touting about in the lowest haunts in every town. The sergeants tipple with the recruits, who are generally under the influence of liquor when they are enlisted, and are always detained in the public-houses until they can be sent to the dépôt battalions.

The recruits are also deceived by false expectations, and are induced to make false representations as to their age, unmarried state, &c.,—it being the interest of the recruiter, for the sake of the head-money, to encourage these deceptions.

As soon as the recruits receive the bounty money their comrades get round them and it is drunk away. The men not only get drunk themselves, but make all the men of their companies drunk too.

The recruiting parties, being lodged in the lowest houses in a town, where they meet only with the worst characters of the place, become depraved; and even good non-commissioned officers, after having been employed on the recruiting service, frequently return to their regiments dissipated in habits and appearance and greatly in debt.

In a recently published pamphlet on our army system, Sir Charles Trevelyan says:—“Further improvements will now, no doubt, be

made in the condition of the soldier, as recommended by the Recruiting Commission; but two changes are so indispensable that, although they have not been recommended, public opinion will surely insist upon them as soon as the evidence appended to the report has been sufficiently considered. One is, that recruiting should be dissociated from drunkenness, by providing proper places in each district where the recruits may be received until they can be forwarded to the dépôt battalions; and the other, that recruits should be protected from the delusion of the ‘shilling a day and one penny beer money,’ by being made clearly to understand that the real terms of service are free lodging, free clothing, free rations, free education, and free medical attendance, with a net rate of pay, which amounts at present to 3d. or 4d. a day, but might with much public advantage be increased to 6d., and be combined with additional encouragement to making deposits in the savings bank. A reference to the evidence indexed under ‘public-houses’ and ‘rendezvous’ will show how open we are to the reproach of tainting our soldiers, at the outset of their career, with that vice which is the cause of most of the crimes committed in the army, and of the flogging, branding, and other punishments which too often complete their demoralisation. Even the non-commissioned officers detached from regiments for the purpose of recruiting become deteriorated in character and morals before they join again. As regards the stoppages, ‘it must be recollected,’ as was said before the commission by an officer who had been promoted from the ranks, ‘that the soldiers are now in a position to form an opinion for themselves;’ and it is therefore time to drop an obsolete, fictitious machinery which is as fertile in misconceptions and irritating questions, as it is cumbrous, obstructive, and the occasion of unnecessary administrative complications. These abuses of the recruiting system were alluded to as follows by the late Mr. Godley, in a memorandum appended to the report of the commission:—

‘I believe that system to be essentially evil, based on falsehood and fraud, and tending directly to infinite immorality. I believe that no thoughtful man can have observed the scenes that take place daily and nightly at the taverns frequented by our recruiting staff, or at the head-quarters of a militia regiment on the day that volunteers for the line are called for, without feeling shame and disgust that such proceedings should form part of the recognised machinery of the British military service. I believe that a fearful responsibility lies upon the Government which deliberately scatters such temptations among the poorest and most helpless classes of its people, and which, for its own political ends, takes advantage of their weaknesses and feeds their vices.’”

The following extract from Mr. O'Reilly's speech in the House of Commons, when moving an address for a Royal Commission on Recruiting, February 21, 1865, illustrates a point referred to by Mr. Godley:—“But how were volunteers too often procured? He knew one instance, and he feared it was far from a solitary one, when a whole regiment of militia was confined to barracks for a week—the men being discharged from all duty, and unlimited sup-

plies of spirits being permitted to pass into the barracks. At the end of the time the regiment gave a quota of intoxicated volunteers to the line."

Second Article.—April 13th, 1867.

ON the 16th ult., the *Alliance News* published a leading article on Drink and the Recruiting System, in which was pointed out the painful and remarkable fact, that the army recruiting system of Great Britain is so arranged as to encourage drunkenness in our soldiers from the hour of their enlistment. We then gave a few extracts and a digest of certain evidence to this effect taken by the Royal Commissioners of 1860 and 1866, and published with their reports; and we now present our readers with further extracts, which will abundantly suffice to prove the positions we then laid down:—

Lieutenant-Colonel THOMSON, C.B., *for fifteen years recruiting officer for the Indian forces at Cork (this was the officer by whose skill and daring in blowing open the gates of Ghaznee the British army in Afghanistan was saved from a position of extreme peril)*: "The men who are recruiting have no extra pay, or very little, except what they pick up from recruits. Of course, they must live about in public-houses—they have no other means of finding lodgings for themselves—so that at present recruiting goes on in public-houses. Of course, they only attract the lowest portion of the population, and that renders the service disreputable in the eyes of the class of people from which it ought to be drawn. I think that that system is radically wrong. I think that the true system of recruiting is to have the recruiters so paid and so circumstanced that they will have a character for respectability in the town, and that those who may wish to enlist will go to them with confidence that they will not be lugged in further than they are ready to go, and that they will not be deceived as to the nature of the service which they are entering on, where the regiment is, or anything else. Whereas now a great number of them are induced to come to a public-house and drink with these men; and it is very common, whether they have been really enlisted properly or not, for them to declare in the morning that they were not enlisted properly—that they were more or less intoxicated and deceived. Then, of course, their relations take the thing up, and they abuse the recruiting party, and abuse the army, and abuse everything concerning it, and the character of the army gets lowered by that."

Sir A. TULLOCH: "Are not the men who are most likely to enlist to be found unfortunately at public-houses?"—"The class who go to public-houses are scamps, and many of them do enlist."

Colonel RUSSELL: "You have mentioned 'bringers;' what class of men are they in Ireland?"—"They are very bad. A man is coming along the road and asks his way; they carry him off, generally to a public-house, and they generally make a bargain with him that he is to drink so many shillings' worth of liquor."

Lieutenant W. F. LOURIE, *Adjutant of the York Recruiting District*: "I consider that men ought to seek to enter the service, rather than have to be caught, as it were; and I think that the whole of the present system of bringing-money and rewards tends to degrade the army in the eyes of the people. It is quite notorious that the recruiting service is at present conducted by crimps, called 'bringers,' who are men generally of the very worst character, touting about in the lowest haunts of every town. Now, I think that that is a state of things which tends to degrade the army. . . . Your placards now contain the words 'bringers liberally rewarded.' The bringers are always the very worst class of men in the town, and I think that the system of paying bringing-money at all is a bad one altogether."

Major-General EYRE, *Commandant at Chatham*: "In my opinion we entrap men too much; that is, the recruiting parties make them drunk, and then if they do not pay the smart, which they cannot do, they become unwilling soldiers and desert."

Mr. S. F. NURSE, *Landlord of one of the chief rendezvous for recruits in Westminster*: "These bringers are always men who are going about in the lowest localities; and where work is to be applied for, they make it their business to look about for men who are searching for employment, and when they get into conversation they give them a pint of beer and a bit of bread and cheese, and say 'Come with me, and I will see whether I can get you a job.' They make an excuse, very likely, and call at one or two places, and after all the men find themselves in Charles-street, Westminster, or somewhere else, and then they get employment from the Queen."

Colonel RUSSELL: "And these bringers, being in civilian clothes, dive into places and haunts where a soldier dares not show himself?"—"If a soldier was to go there, he very likely would find it too warm for him."

J. R. GODLEY, Esq., *Assistant Under Secretary of State for War* (Mr. Godley was a person of no ordinary worth, and his premature death is a real national loss; the valuable aid he gave to emigration is well known, and his statue is to be erected at Christchurch, in New Zealand, in acknowledgment of his services to that colony): "I think that the present system almost necessarily involves getting a discreditable class of recruits; and that naturally gives service in the ranks a bad name, and makes it repulsive to respectable people. I consider the way in which recruits are obtained to be both discreditable and immoral; the recruiting sergeants frequent low public-houses, and tell lies there, and make the men half drunk, and they get necessarily a class of people whom one is ashamed to see following them."

Colonel HOPE GRAHAM, C.B., *Inspecting Field Officer of the London Recruiting District*:—Chairman: "I believe that it has been one complaint against the recruiting of the army that it has been carried on in a manner inconsistent with the strict *morale* of the army, by being entirely conducted in public-houses?"—"Entirely."

"Do you not think that recruiting might be facilitated by opening in every district, either at the expense of the Government or by some other means, respectable houses to which recruits might resort

or might be taken by bringers for the purpose of being enlisted in the army?"—"I think that it would be most desirable."

"Do you not think that it would have any good effect upon the recruiting of the army so to do?"—"That is a very hard question to answer; because at present there is no great inclination, I think, on the part of the people to come forward and to enter the service. At present you must go where you can find the material, and the material unfortunately is to be found in those localities. In the police service, which is very popular, they do not go and hunt through the public-houses for men; the men come forward and go to them, and try to get into the police. But with us, unfortunately, it is just the reverse, and we must seek them where they are to be found."

Brigadier-General G. CAMPBELL, C.B., *Commanding at Aldershot*: "I think that you get the refuse of the population, so far as my judgment goes; men who have no other option left them than to go into the army."

Captain PERCY G. B. LAKE, *Adjutant to the Third Royal Lancashire Militia*:—Chairman: "Would you suggest that the recruiting should be carried on in any different manner than it is at present, which is principally in public-houses?"—"I think that if that could be avoided you would get a better class of men. Men enlisting when they have been under the influence of drink are more liable to desert when they are sober."

Mr. WILLIAM GODDARD, *late Sergeant in the 23rd Fusiliers*:—Mr. Whitbread: "Did you recruit chiefly from public-houses or not?"—"From public-houses. I was putting up at a public-house."

"And, to use a common term, you drank yourself into the good graces of the recruits before they would come?"—"Yes."

"Did they come with the consent of their friends, or in opposition to their friends' wishes?"—"Not with the consent of their friends."

Lieutenant-Colonel G. THOMSON, C.B.:—Colonel Leslie: "A person, in fact, who will tell the truth?"—"Yes, that is a great point; a man in whom the country people have confidence that he will not enlist them for one regiment or service when they intend to join another. That is a very common thing."

Major-General Lord FREDERICK PAULET, C.B.: "What do you say now? You say 'a soldier's pay is 1s. 1d. a day.' It is not that. I think you do not act fairly to him. A man may say, 'I enlisted because I thought that I was to get 1s. 1d. a day;' and he does not. That is not fair upon him."

Mr. GODLEY, *Assistant Under Secretary for War*: "The stoppage system is not known to any army except the British, and I have never been able to obtain any other explanation of or reason for it, than it helps recruiting by making people believe the soldier's pay to be higher than it really is."

Colonel EDMUND JEFFREYS, C.B., *Commanding a Depot Battalion*:—Major-General Forster: "Do you think that the recruit is enlisted under false views?"—"Under false views. He is drunk, many times. He is married. He goes before the magistrates, and he is told by these fellows to say that he is unmarried; and he is

told to say that he is 24 years of age, when perhaps he is 35 or 38. The subdivision officer must see that he is infinitely older than he represents himself to be, but it is his interest to get him on because there is his income; but give him a fixed salary, and he would not have that interest."

Mr. SAMUEL HADEN, *Quartermaster to the 16th Regiment (previously Secretary to the Army and Navy Pensioners' Employment Society)*: "In a great many instances the men on the recruiting service lead recruits to suppose that they are to receive 1s. a day free of deductions, and they only find out the difference after they have enlisted."

Chairman: "That would show that there was gross deception practised on the part of the recruiting parties towards the men?"—"I believe it is the case frequently."

Mr. GODLEY, *Assistant Under Secretary for War*: "It is unnecessary, I suppose, to argue against bounty. It is, in fact, self-condemned, being nothing else than an undisguised appeal to the appetite for present indulgence, to which the class from which we draw our recruits is so prone. The whole of the bounty-money is not merely pure waste. It is, in fact, a curse, and not a boon to the soldier, being almost invariably spent in riot and debauchery."

Major-General EYRE, *Commandant at Chatham*:—Sir A. Tulloch: "Do you find that giving bounty by instalments, say 1s. a day, leads in any respect to drunkenness, either among the recruits or those soldiers who are comrades of the recruits?"—"Not by giving the bounty in instalments of 1s."

"Do you not find it leads to drunkenness?"—"Not much. The other way does, because the man makes all his company drunk, unless he keeps it to enable him to desert."

Dr. J. F. NICHOLLS, *Surgeon of the Wiltshire Militia*: "Directly they get the bounty-money, the men in their own companies get round them, and it is all drunk out directly."

Major-General EYRE, *Commandant at Chatham*: "I think it very doubtful whether non-commissioned officers and private soldiers being employed as recruiting parties is for the benefit of the country without some revision of the system. The regiments suffer enormously by their absence. Some get very demoralised; there is no doubt about that. Many get married, and sometimes badly married, without leave. They are sent in, and others are sent out who get into the same state. And then they go about the villages getting into public-houses, and very often misconduct themselves, and so get the army into disrepute."

Captain J. M'KAY (*this officer served in nearly every rank and capacity from drummer to captain in the School of Musketry and Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-General*): "I have known good non-commissioned officers, after having been employed on the recruiting service for a short period, return to their regiments dissipated in habits and appearance. . . . I have known many good non-commissioned officers who have been sent on the recruiting service, and in two years' time they have returned with dissipated habits and over head and ears in debt."

Colonel E. MOORE, *Commanding the First Battalion of the 11th Regiment*: "I think that the system of inveigling young fellows in a half state of drunkenness is very bad; and I think that the system of the regimental recruiting parties being lodged in the lowest houses in a town is bad. They become depraved. They only meet with the bad characters of the place, and those are almost the first persons that a recruit on joining is introduced to."

Major-General GIBSONE: "There is a great objection in a regiment to send out good men. They do not send out their best men, because they know that when these men are sent out on recruiting service they become perfectly useless on their return to their regiment. They are broken down and unfit for regimental duty."

We may add that Sir CHARLES TREVELYAN, in a pamphlet on the Purchase System in the British Army, which has recently been published by Longmans, Green, and Co., makes in his preface the following observations which bear upon this subject:—

"The most disheartening thing of all is, that we appear to be revolving in a vicious circle, for the proposals submitted to Parliament in the recent supplementary estimate would only make bad worse. The Recruiting Commission report that 'bounty-money is usually spent in riot and dissipation, and any increase in that direction would only tend to demoralise the army, and to encourage desertion;' yet it is proposed largely to increase the bounty-money. The head-money paid to recruiters is the immediate stimulus to the tippling and swindling of the recruiting system; yet the head-money is to be raised from 15s. to 20s. for each recruit enlisted for a specified regiment, and to 25s. for each recruit enlisted for general service. The chronic cause of misunderstanding and complaint is the discrepancy between the nominal and real amount of the soldier's pay; and yet it is proposed to add 2d. a day to the nominal pay, instead of deducting it from the stoppages. The soldier is not even to be encouraged to profitable industry, by giving him his fatigue-jacket and forage-cap free, as recommended by the commission. Until the stoppages are reduced and equalised, so that the soldier may, under all the circumstances of his service, receive the same net rate of pay, to be diminished only by his own misconduct or mismanagement, we shall not be able to prepare, in a presentable form, the long-desired official statement of the advantages of his position, so as to save the youth of the country from the misrepresentations of recruiters, and to put the soldier's engagement on the footing of an honest, well-understood contract."

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